

F A L D O N I

A N D

T E R E S A.

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IS IT IN HEAVEN A CRIME TO LOVE TOO WELL?

POPE.

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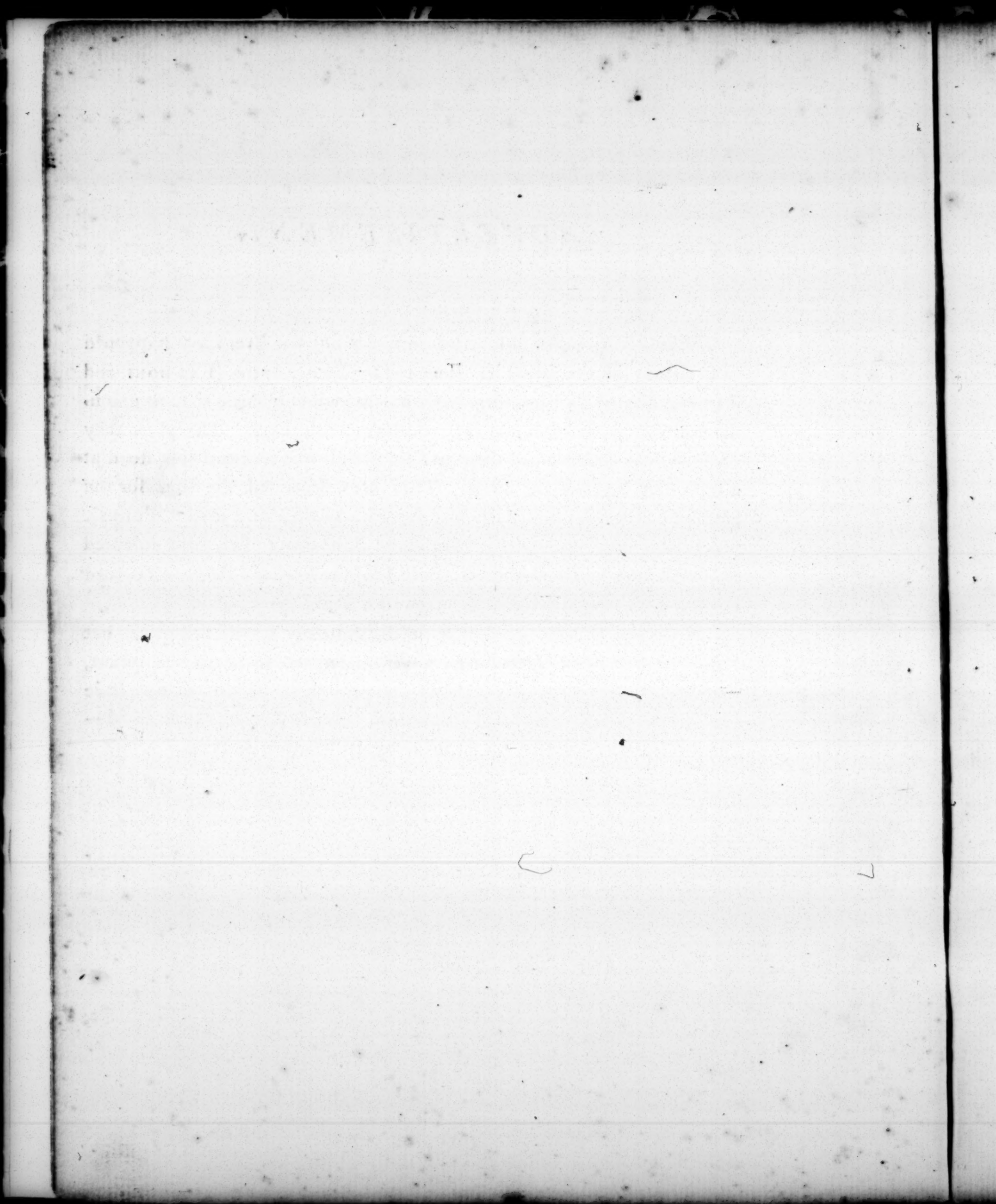


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The following poem is founded on a very singular Event that happened near Lyons in the month of June 1770—Two Lovers (FALDONI and TERESA MEUNIER) meeting with an invincible obstacle to their union, determined to put an end to their existence with pistols. The place they chose for the execution of their terrible project was a chapel that stood at a little distance from the house. They even decorated the altar for the occasion: they also paid a particular attention to their own dress: TERESA was dressed in white, with rose-coloured Ribbands: The same coloured Ribbands were tied to the pistols. Each held the Ribband that was fastened to the other's trigger, which they drew at a signal agreed upon.

‘ Arria and Pætus (says Monsieur de Voltaire) set the example, but
‘ then it must be considered they were condemned to death by a tyrant,
‘ whereas love was the only inventor and perpetrator of the deed we have
‘ recorded—See *Questions sur L'Encyclopedie, Articles De caton et de suicide*—
‘ See also a book entitled *Les Tableaux* by the Marquis de Pèzai.



FALDONI AND TERESA,

TO you, ye sons of France, the Muse appeals,
To vouch the truth of what she now reveals:
Say, have ye not beheld what love can dare,
When torn with grief, and prompted by despair.
Still urg'd by pity ye bewail their doom, 5
Still to the traveller ye mark the tomb,
Where sleep, from tyrant laws, and sorrows free,
The youthful victims of their own decree.

All-ruling Love, the God of Youth, possess'd
Entire dominion of FALDONI's breast: 10
An equal flame did sympathy impart,
(A flame destructive) to TERESA's heart:

B

As



As on one stem two opening flowers respire,
 So grew their life (entwin'd) on one desire:
 Yet lest their hopes parental power should blast, 15
 Still o'er their love her veil Concealment cast:
 Near to the mansion, on a secret spot,
 (Meet haunt for lovers) rose a sylvan grot:
 True to the stated moment still they came,
 Here breath'd the vow, here fed the mutual flame; 20
 Here form'd to list'ning Heaven the firm resolve,
 Which power, nor fate averse, shou'd e'er dissolve:
 This grot the confident of ev'ry fear,
 This kind recess that bosom'd ev'ry tear,
 Where oft the impassion'd soul they did assuage, 25
 Urg'd by a warmth congenial to their age,
 Still they devoted to the pow'r above,
 And fondly call'd the Temple of their Love.

Once as they hasten'd to this still retreat,
 The mutual object of their wish to meet, 30
 FALDONI saw the beauteous maid distress'd,
 Her check with terror and alarm impress:

Saw

Saw rais'd to Heav'n her supplicating eyes,
As if to deprecate the vengeful skies :

' Ah speak (he cried) with anxious wonder fraught, 35

' What undivided care employs thy thought ?'

In accents suited to the strain of woe,
TERESA thus indulg'd her thoughts to flow :

' The cloud, which long has threaten'd to destroy,

' With rage redoubled bursts upon our joy: 40

' Ev'n thro' the friendly veil Concealment wove,

' There are who mark'd the progress of our love :

' To pity dead, and Nature's stronger claim,

' A father—Whence does he usurp that name ?

' Ah had thine eyes beheld the cruel scene, 45

' As with indignant and tremendous mien,

' While to his mercy kneeling I applied,

' With barb'rous hand he flung me from his side,

' And bad me—Oh insensible of heart !

' Far from his angry presence to depart, 50

' Unless—Can I pronounce his dread demand ?

' I wou'd from thee withdraw this plighted hand :

' Behold

(4)

' Behold me banish'd from my native home,
' To thee a hapless fugitive I come,
' Bent to the ground beneath Misfortune's show'r, 55
' Affliction's bride, a father's curse my dow'r :
' Yet why complain ! still happy in thy love,
' What more can earth bestow, or Heaven above ?

' For this are daughters born, (FALDONI cried)
' To fall the victims of parental pride ! 60
' When nature, youth, and sympathy unite,
' Say, shall a father's voice forbid the rite ?
' Shall he, with cruel and relentless hands,
' O'erthrow the altar ? tear the nuptial bands ?
' But thou with love and virtue shall combine, 65
' To break the law that bids thee not be mine :
' Still shall the lov'd TERESA be my bride :
' Not Fortune's gifts to which thou art allied,
' In my attachment claim'd their venal part,
' I sought what love requires, a tender heart : 70
' Tho' wreck'd, despoil'd, of Fortune's golden store,
' Rich only in thy heart, I prize thee more.

With

' With me ascend yon Alpinean height,
 ' Let Italy's bright sun illumine our flight,
 ' There, haply there, at our disastrous tale, 75
 ' In some kind breast compassion may prevail!
 ' In vain—for busy apprehension still
 ' Alarms my love, and traverses my will:
 ' Worn with the labours of the length'ning way,
 ' Should'st thou sink down to weariness a prey: 80
 ' If in that moment, by thy father led,
 ' Of Ruffians thou should'st hear the thund'ring tread,
 ' What wou'd my rage, by love impell'd, avail,
 ' If, as the coward numbers shou'd prevail,
 ' (Thou most ador'd, thou blest with every charm) 85
 ' They still shou'd tear thee from this vanquish'd arm,
 ' Not all their cruelty (the fair rejoin'd)
 ' Shall ever boast a conquest o'er my mind,
 ' Ne'er shall they wrest this heart, still uncontrol'd,
 ' From Constancy's embrace, and Passion's hold: 90
 ' If to the law that bids me not be thine,
 ' One more severe, a father, shou'd adjoin,

(6)

‘ To rescue still my soul from that distress,
‘ A thought, enbosom’d in this heart’s recess,
‘ Shou’d, rising into act—Ah spare the rest!— 95
‘ Say can’t thy fancy my resolve suggest?—
‘ This poniard—

‘ Greatly thought (the youth reply’d)
‘ Be bolder still, and let my voice decide :
‘ The ills to come, why tremblingly await? 100
‘ Ah rather meet inevitable fate !
‘ Let us, since life, with foul and haggard mien,
‘ Holds to our wishes but a desert scene,
‘ To Death’s dread region urge our daring way,
‘ And quit the aspect of the living day. 105

‘ I give (she cry’d) this breast, ’tis thine, to bleed,
‘ Ah more than give, I glory in the deed :
‘ Unfold the means—the instruments prepare—
‘ All, all that daring Love can do, I dare.

‘ The

The youth rejoin'd : ' When o'er the silent world 110

- ' The hand of Darknefs has her veil unfurl'd :
- ' When thro' her mid career the Night has run,
- ' Shall, warranted by Love, a deed be done,
- ' Which not the records of Distrefs can show,
- ' Thro' the long page of love-created woe : 115
- ' The facred wall of this fequefter'd spot,
- ' That's doom'd to witnefs our unhappy lot,
- ' Shall (an eternal monument) proclaim
- ' Affection's triumph, and parental fhame.
- ' Ev'n to the tomb, where sorrow fhall repofe, 120
- ' Where Pity's hand our afhes fhall enclofe,
- ' Her num'rous train pofterity fhall lead,
- ' And to her children thus unfold the deed :
- ' *Here (ballow'd spot) Love's martyrs reft fecure ;*
- ' *Ab ! what they fuffer'd may ye ne'er endure :*
- ' But why to vain difcourfe thus idly give
- ' The precious moments—while I talk we live.'

The ftated hour at length approaching near,
Th' unhappy youth beheld, devoid of fear :

See

See to the grot the faithful maid repair,

130

Prepar'd to act the counsel of despair.

With eager arms he strain'd her to his breast,

And thus the purpose of his soul express'd.

' See rear'd by me yon sacred altar stands,

' Adorn'd with lights, and dress'd with flow'ry bands: 135

' See near the cross (in silken chains array'd)

' The ready instruments of Death display'd:

' Nor pale regret, nor doubt, the coward's train,

' Shall dare the orgies of this night profane:

' But intrepidity, that life disdains,

140

' And breaks, Oh Prejudice! thy pow'rful chains:

' With Confidence, that lifts her raptur'd eye,

' To meet the future blessings of the sky,

' And chearfulness, white-vested as a bride,

' With blue-ey'd Pleasure walking at her side,

145

' Delightful band! shall to yon altar move,

' To celebrate the festival of Love.

' But say, TERESA, do these eyes mislead?

' Or dost thou tremble at the hallow'd deed?

' Yes,

' Yes, treach'rous fear, thy troubled aspect pales, 150
 ' Ah lost FALDONI!——thy companion fails :
 ' Wil't thou, departing from thy first design,
 ' Submit to live ?——yet will I not repine :
 ' Shall at my voice that beauty cease to bloom ?
 ' And does my love condemn thee to the tomb ? 155
 ' Shal't thou in flow'r of youth resign thy life,
 ' And smile in death to be FALDONI's wife ?
 ' The base, th'ungen'rous wish I now disown,
 ' FALDONI acts the tragic scene alone :
 ' In pity leave me to my own despair, 160
 ' Nor stay to witness what thou must not share :
 ' Return——thy presence my resolve disarms,
 ' Return——and bless an aged father's arms :
 ' Tell him the youth, by beauty's charm beguil'd,
 ' Who taught rebellion to his only child, 165
 ' Urg'd by that fatal passion is no more,
 ' Slain by his hand, and welt'ring in his gore !

' Oh! dire resolve, (the heart-pierc'd mourner cries)
 ' Joy sinks for ever when FALDONI dies :

D

' Yet,

‘ Yet, yet reflect——reverse the cruel doom—— 170

‘ Still let me snatch thee from the youthful tomb :

‘ There faithful Love resigns his sacred fires,

‘ Remembrance sickens, and bright hope expires.

In vain (he added) life unfolds her charms

‘ While she with-holds thee from these widow’d arms : 175

‘ Depriv’d of thee the world’s a desert shore,

‘ Round which the surges beat and tempests roar :

‘ ’Tis wisdom then to launch into the main,

‘ And seek the clime where happier seasons reign :

‘ Enough——may length of days and joy be thine, 180

‘ Let truth, let constancy, and death be mine.’

The fair, indignant said——‘ Too hasty youth,

‘ He who suspects first breaks the law of truth !

‘ Did not this bosom, first by passion taught,

‘ Conceive, unprompted, the intrepid thought ? 185

‘ Did not this voice first speak the bold decree,

‘ To perish rather than be false to thee ?

‘ Mark

' Mark how these hands have deck'd this little form,
 ' To grace the rites I'm destin'd to perform ;
 ' Behold me now impatient, self-decreed, 190
 ' The gaudy victim at Love's shrine to bleed.

' Thou glory of thy sex, (the youth replied)
 ' O'erwhelm'd and lost in passion's rushing tide,
 ' My sense was drown'd—now to thy merit just,
 ' Ev'n to thy courage, as thy love I trust. 195

' That courage welcomes (spoke the beauteous maid)
 ' This terror-shedding scene, for death array'd :
 ' Yet then Religion acts her rigid part,
 ' Forbear she cries, and damps the boldest heart :
 ' Methinks I view wide op'ning at my feet, 200
 ' Form'd by an angry God, the direful seat :
 ' Now, now I hear infernal voices call,
 ' And from the gulph fiends beckon us to fall :
 ' Ev'n as I hasten'd to this bless'd retreat,
 ' The vow that love had witness'd to compleat, 205

The

‘ The darken’d air sent forth a voice unknown,
‘ That shriek’d my name—the forest breath’d a groan—
‘ Ill-omen’d birds across my passage flew,
‘ And frighten’d Nature shudder’d at my view.

‘ To airy nothing give (the youth rejoin’d) 210
‘ From whence they sprung, these spectres of the mind :
‘ Ah ! know meek homage can that God assuage,
‘ And turn to clemency awaken’d rage :
‘ What he the most requires, thou can’st impart,
‘ ’Tis Virtue’s offering, an unspotted heart. 215
‘ Let us implore him at yon altar’s base,
‘ To bless our deed with his absolving grace :
‘ Which as the sun, whose vivifying ray,
‘ Gilds the dark cloud that wou’d obscure the day,
‘ Will gild within the dark’ning thoughts that roll, 220
‘ And beautify the purpose of our soul :
‘ Then shall the host of saints at Virtue’s call,
‘ Behold our act, and consecrate our fall.’

He spoke—when guided by a rage divine,
‘Th’enthusiast led her to the sacred shrine : 225

Then

Then, as their bended knee the ground impress'd,
He thus aloud the throne of grace address'd :
' Thou who did'st form our mutual hearts to glow,
' With all the feelings that the tender know,
' Behold us by a parent's voice with-held, 230
' From rites connubial, and from joy expell'd :
' Free of remorse, the guilty feel, we die,
' To thee from woes and tyrant-laws we fly :
' Ah from our fears remove thy vengeful rod,
' And be at once our Father and our God.' 235

Now, on the fair, FALDONI cast his eye,
While half-suppress'd arose compassion's sigh :
' Prepare (he said) the tragic scene to close,
' And shun the fate that iron-hearts impose :
' Yet, when I think, if stern parental pow'r 240
' Had to our wishes giv'n the nuptial hour,
' Life might have wing'd its way supremely blest,
' By fortune favour'd, and by love carest :
' Ah wonder not these tears unbidden flow,
' That round thy form these arms encircling grow; 245

E

' That

' That not ev'n Wisdom's dictates can control,
' The grief that harrows up my bleeding soul.
' Yet will I not too lavishly complain,
' A future world may recompence our pain.
' Ah! in that world shou'd we, too blest, rejoin, 250
' No father there shall traverse Love's design:
' Thee to my hope shou'd fav'ring Heav'n bestow,
' Ah! let us love as we have lov'd below.

' Tho' flatt'ring Hope (she said) inform your breast
' This bosom owns not such a welcome guest: 255
' Tho' Passion's torch illumine the path we tread,
' Drear is the passage to the silent dead:
' Yet not the less do I consent to steer
' Thro' this tremendous sea of doubt and fear:
' The dread omniscient pow'r, who rules above, 260
' Still sees my fears subjected to my love.
' I go—whate'er that pow'r shall now ordain,
' To view thy bliss, or to divide thy pain.

Lo near the instruments of death they stand!
To which they reach a bold determin'd hand: 265
Oh

‘ Oh unexampled fair (FALDONI said)
‘ To life’s pale confines by thy lover led,
‘ Think not these engines destin’d to destroy,
‘ Ah rather deem them hallow’d keys of joy!
‘ Whose magic pow’r, to screen from future woes, 270
‘ Eternity’s bright portal shall unclofe!
‘ Then shall TERESA from each care releas’d
‘ ‘Mid angels take her radiant feat’—

He ceas’d.

‘ Yet ere (she cried) we meet th’ impending doom,
‘ Yet ere we sink into th’ untimely tomb, 275
‘ Let me, reclining on that tender heart,
‘ The farewell accents of my love impart:
‘ —Methinks we stand beneath Death’s hov’ring pall
‘ Pass one short moment and we both must fall:
‘ One moment—and dire ruin shall deface, 280
‘ Sent from this thund’ring tube, each living grace;
‘ That form, which still I view, shall know decay,
‘ And all that beauty be the grave-worm’s prey:
‘ Distracting thought—Who spoke the dread command?
‘ Who with this fiery weapon arm’d this hand?— 285
‘ Born

- ' Born by the torrent of distress away,
- ' My lost afflicted thoughts from reason stray :
- ' Forgive this weakness—worthy still of thee
- ' I'm still prepar'd to fall at Love's decree.

See now FALDONI draw aside the vest, 290
And to the sight reveal his naked breast :
As if, impatient to embrace his fate,
He griev'd one instant had prolong'd his date :
This scene the firmness of her mind appalls
And all her wonted tenderness recalls. 295

- ' Is it for me that breast with blood to stain
- ' And pierce that heart with agonizing pain ?
- ' That feeling heart—where ev'ry virtue glows ?
- ' Where I possess the rank that love bestows ?
- ' The voice of Nature sure forbids the deed : 300
- ' Ne'er shall FALDONI by this engine bleed,
- ' On me, on me it now shall act its part,
- ' (She said) and boldly held it to her heart.

FAL-

FALDONI swiftly seiz'd her daring hand,
 And spoke—'Ah what has thy distraction plann'd? 305
 ' The sacred plan, that Love ordain'd, recall :
 ' Slain by each other's willing arm to fall.
 ' Now heav'n methinks with our resolve conspires,
 ' And o'er yon tapers sheds the purest fires :
 ' Gives to yon twining wreaths a brighter bloom 310
 ' And o'er the censor breaths divine perfume :
 ' While, mystic emblems of eternal day,
 ' Above the altar lambent glories play.'

She added——' faithful to thy just demand,
 ' I'll now direct this death-entrusted hand : 315
 ' And now at length I take the parting view,
 ' Ah ! now these lips pronounce the last adieu :
 ' FALDONI, Oh my treasure ! Oh my pride !
 ' In life, in love, in death to me allied !
 ' May fairs prepare the garland for thy brow— 320
 ' Farewell—to yonder conscious shrine I vow,
 ' This voice which faintly pours its closing strain,
 ' Shall never utter thy fond name again.'

F

They

They now approach to give the fatal wound,
While trembling Expectation hovers round: 325
One solemn moment they reserve to pray'r.
And now the dire explosion rends the air,
They fall——and to the awful pow'r above,
Reign the tortur'd soul of hopeless love.

Unhappy victims! tho' cold reason hear, 330
Your mournful story with unheeding ear:
Tho' pious zealots at your death exclaim,
Still sacred Pity consecrates your name:
Ev'n stern Religion as she sees you bleed,
Lest fall a tear, and half-absolves the deed. 335

F I N I S.

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